

NOT YET DAMASCUS



EMMANUEL FRU DOH

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

Not Yet Damascus

Poems by

Emmanuel Fru Doh



Langa Research & Publishing CIG
Mankon, Bamenda

Publisher:
Langa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group
P.O. Box 902 Mankon
Bamenda
North West Province
Cameroon

Contact Address:
Langaagrp@gmail.com
www.langaapublisher.com

ISBN: 9956-558-07-9

© Emmanuel Fru Doh 2007

First Published 2007

Dedication

For my sons: Valery, Bernardine, and Bertrand.

&

For all those who have died, sacrificed a limb, or simply been a genuine part of this ridiculous struggle to get Cameroon's and Africa's leaders thinking about the welfare of their citizens instead of betraying each other for worthless positions in governments distinguished by corruption, pilfering, and the illegal piling of public funds in private accounts overseas.

To God Almighty Be Praise and Glory

Preface

Born of common hardworking parents at the dawn of a new era for my disheveled society, shredded by colonial activities, I grew up indoctrinated to fear my heroes who were being hunted down in the name of terrorists by the puppet regime of Ahmadou Ahidjo. And so my father, a young and disciplined Ikeja-trained police man would leave on duty for months on end, my mother, a young spouse, oblivious as to when her beloved will return. Even though a child, I remember my father in the company of my mother at dusk, the only one he could trust at the time, lamenting the goings-on, the death of so many innocent people. I remember this picture he brought back once, but would not let me see it because of the gruesome images of slain Cameroonians. The name Tombel struck fear in my heart then, alas humble folks transformed in to enemies of the state by a paranoid fledgling regime, the puppeteer a hypocritical colonial nation.

In hindsight, living during that epoch was hell as Southern Cameroons was just being slowly but tactfully incapacitated by Ahidjo. One needed a “Laissez Passez” — a kind of pass— to move from one part of the country to the other, with intimidating Francophone gendarmes suddenly all over the place. Their tactics were strange, even to the eyes of a child; it was a state of emergency. I knew they were brutes and disrespectful of civilians as I could easily compare them with Southern Cameroons Police officers around whom I was growing up. This was the disciplined force the gendarmes were now gradually infiltrating and contaminating. I am glad I was just a child at the time as all the ado did not mean much to me in so far as I had my meals and dad and mum were about. But the times were ushering in a new and gloomy era as I have witnessed order disintegrate into chaos, our nation into a wasteland, and so I continue wondering what all the ruckus at independence was about, with heroes killed or incarcerated for years—Um Nyobe, Ernest Ouandie, Albert Womah Mukong, and the rest.

Those were days one thought would usher in the reign of peace and love with that homecoming, our country in our hands; it was cloud-cuckoo-land. Even more disillusioning is the fact that there are foreign tentacles still clinging to the white and red blood cells of my nation even as we the citizens go about anemic, ridiculed and insulted by the disease-causing-bacteria of neo-colonial machinations. The atmosphere of fear and persecution is still pervasive decades after the ultimate sacrifice by our national heroes, felled by colonialist bullets. The exploitation of my nation is still on, at its peak in fact, with our resources still being carted away before our very eyes, with living standards fallen to poverty level, leaving the nation gyrating in convulsive spasms instead of planned socio-economic rhythms, even as the harlequins in positions of leadership continue clinging to power for no reason other than that they want to be the ones in power. They have hijacked and privatized the nation's resources for a clique to squander at will and without any accountability. Those who could challenge the rot have been reduced to a cowering lot as a myopic soldiery commits suicide by the elimination of members of a resilient proletariat. The result is an intoxicated government, its citizens exhausted at their betrayal by administrative Lilliputians. All we seem to be able to do now besides drinking, dying, or going on self-exile, is wait for God to intervene, with death dusting away administrative cobwebs.

Accordingly, the poems of this volume amount to an emotional journey as I console myself and society by thinking of the good days of old: venting my anger at the traitors of our nation's socio-economic pilgrimage in "Persecution," finding time to praise and comfort those victimized by life's experiences in "Victims," even as I chide others for treachery and ingratitude while lamenting the demise of great souls that otherwise will forever remain unsung personal and public heroes in "Musing."

With the history of persecution by colonialist and native sons and daughters culminating into this hour of pain and lament, one would have thought our African leaders especially, would be prodigals, alter egos of Saul – Paul – after the light on

the way to Damascus. Yet, in the voice of the people I hear the Master lamenting His persecution instead. May these poems enlighten and fashion true patriots of us all.

Emmanuel Fru Doh
Minnesota
October 2007.

Contents

PERSECUTION	1
In Moments like These	2
Double Decade	3
Guardians of the Peace	5
Jonah	6
Anti-clockwise	7
Fear-Fear King	9
Like Serpents	10
Their Turn to Party	11
That Learned Professor	13
Lament of the Kolanut	14
Africa	16
Worry For My People	17
Africa's Journey	18
A Mother's Tears	19
The Conspirators	21
Claustrophobia	23
VICTIMS	24
Mea Culpa	25
My One Great Friend	27
Yefon, Woman of Strength	29
On My Id	31
Champagnat's Model	32
The Traveler's Invocation	34
Death	35

The Trail	39
The Tombstone	40
Samaritan I	42
Samaritan II	43
Thunderclap	45
MUSING	47
Time	48
Birth Tidings	49
On Being Betrayed	50
On Familiarity and Contempt	51
I am Who I am	52
Metamorphosis of the Homo Sapiens	53
How Much Akin	54
The First Rains	55
Bird of the Night	56
My Love Is Gone	57
The Mind and Its Games	59
The Pieta	60
Despair	61
Pretenders to the Throne	63
Ship Ahoy	64

PERSECUTION

In Moments Like These

In moments like these,
The desert of life
Sweltering with the lack of trust
For government, leaders, then the self,
When my soles tread to an unholy union
Worth the soul of doubt
Then melting away in this mighty quicksand
I will grapple and grapple
Keeping the faith, albeit
Frail, even as I resist
Like a candle wick
Flickering in the harmattan swirl
And then ...
Spread out my arms to you
Mother earth -
Constant like hope.

Double Decade

Gently the years have rolled by
Since the Nyoseous bubble – Pharaoh’s lie –
And a thousand guinea-pigs and more!

Two decadent decades already,
And all the aid rushed in by giants,
“Concerned” giants,
Yet two decades after
And post all the ado,
Nothing!
Nothing told the nation
Of meaning and causes
Of the Lake God’s wrath.

Two decadent decades already,
The nation is yet to mourn for my people
No national monument to remind us of them
Or give meaning to their sacrifice,
Instead an idiotic nimbleness:
A Nsimalene Party house for orangutans.

And so I remember
The stolen aid by those in charge,
And the victims of the victims
Left to rot in state-sponsored misery.
Yet how close we are
In Hades these victims to join,
And see them still clinging
On to golden nothingness
And worthless money boxes,
Those victims of man’s labs
Yet we learn not the meaninglessness of life
Not in the Master invested.

Let me see you bribe Yahweh
For twenty more wasteful years

Prove Eboa Lotin wrong – Vanity!
Take along golf clubs and course,
Take along palaces, bank accounts
And Nsimalene for a styxian touchdown,
Just plain stupid!

Guardians of the Peace

Ours were keepers of the peace indeed.
They loved and enjoyed their job for real,
Discipline the hallmark
Of the Southern Cameroons' police.
State servant, friend, the law all in one,
To protect and keep the peace
Their only commandment.

Then entered these harlequins
Strangers to our standards,
They feel above the law instead
And know nothing about law and order.
Like bats in daylight they forage on
Maturing in confusion and corruption;
These are not officers of the law
Indeed they are "men of arms."

A sore in the eye:
Thorn and dusty uniforms
Unkempt shoes that can't line up
A good parade to present
With alien medals on alien uniforms:
A policeman with a paratrooper's medal,
Their formless salute a buffoon's gesture
Stinking of alcohol.

They've earned no respect
Force their only way out
This gang I see before me today
Vandals in uniform
Pretenders to the throne
Of officers of the peace.

Jonah

Those trucks are huge
The logs in their bellies
A strange pregnancy;

Those trucks, drunk tankers
All day in line – SONARA Pub – *
Drinking black brew, bituminous malt;

Those trailers are wide, long and loaded
Eyes of X-ray revealing fardels:
Bananas, tea, coca, coffee....

This exploitative
Cooperation with my people.

Huge trucks, driver ants milling along,
Gasping, belching, groaning on,
Delivering, puking, excreting
Into metallic whales burping on waves
With snorting blasts of seawater.

Away, away from these shores
These metallic whales
Shall regurgitate treasures
To the benefit of shores of the metropolis
The farmhands forever that.

In the distance they witness the lights in the sky,
Towering structures, symbols of wealth – alien wealth -
Originating from their tropical sweat,
Their tropical forest,
Their tropical plantations in Africa.

* SONARA is the acronym for Cameroon's oil refinery

Anti-Clockwise

Time!

1982 to 2000 plus already,
Decades of bloodsucking zombies
The period when the hour-hand
Toiled to the left instead,
When dwarfs paraded as giants
Fumbling in high thrones
Determined in control to stay
Even as the nation crashed.

Not even the sun is gold
When traitors pose as saviors
With society on its head.

Of Orwellian dogs
With rations underserved
Honored for devouring their masters,
And the gray matter of society ignored,
Ridiculed and slighted with
Monthly crumbs of Mvondoian token.
The pen stymied, the gun shimmering
And dripping oil,
This hour of macabre rituals
And demonized priorities.

Money is money but cannot buy all.
See underlings crisscrossing the triangle
Like Arabian genies on banknote carpets;
With election-time surpluses
Blindfolding Fanon's throng to
Maintain the reign of weeds.

And so-called scholars in Luciferan dominions
Of demon-crazy, like the thugs they are,
Corrupting voters with unaccounted for
Crayfish money.

This hour of darkness,
Yet in the East I see the glimmer,
It will be dawn eventually.

Fear-Fear King

All rumors
Else all lies from the town criers,
At dawn, at mid-day, at dusk,
From Babatoura's ouster to Paulism.

Rumors of upcoming elections
Rumors about the queen's death – manner;
Rumors about Nyos – how, what?
Rumors about where you are
Rumors of a new queen
Rumors about your ways
And those with whom you misgovern
Rumors about your investments
Rumors about your filthy wealth
Rumors about your health
Rumors about your decisions of a 'chopchair'
As if on your father's Meka'a's throne
Rumors about your death...

Rumors, rumors, rumors!
Never a day like a real man
Dangling twin balls
Never a day like a true leader
With a purpose
To stand and tell your people the truth,
If not rumors, then lies
You fear-fear king.

Here at last it comes - the end,
And pray not before Damascus.
What shall you rumor this time?
You never died?
Fear-fear king.

Like Serpents

Never trust a serpent,
A tempter never straight in its ways:

At rest it is coiled
At work spiraled
This sly looks shy
Yet the hour to strike.

This coward by day rests
And sets to work at dusk,
Preying on all alike
Feeding and hurting in mock humility
This hypocrite lays pretending humility
Like all traitors, waiting to sell its cause.

Yet in all its glittering slyness
Its venomous nonchalance
Ridiculous medals of achievements
This traitor thrives
On cheap and corrupt ways

Is it birds of same feathers
Flock together
Or show me your friend
And I can tell who you are?

These leaders today
Serpents of different kinds in strange
Political garments which they shed
As gains come and go.

Their Turn to Party

(For Linus T. Asong)

After raising our hopes
With Mosiac strides
Defying bullets, canons and all
Trekking ghost town streets
Even pointing out the promise land,
What is this lethargy?

Who are we now to trust?
Who indeed God's messenger-
Pharaoh's magician at work
Moses and Aaron at war
And God's people marooned,
What is this lethargy?

Of black birds in the sky
Spewing grenades on my people
Of limbs flying in the fired streets
On we forged from Pharaoh's Etoudi
Bondage to set ourselves free, now
What is this lethargy?

Why bring us out of Egypt
To die in this desert? Now
Behind curtained caravans you watch
Striding from oasis to oasis
From the battle field even with the blood
And the sacrifice of youths to the embrace
Of your solitary comfort, Pharaoh's pacifier.
What is this lethargy?

Of parliamentarians without drive
Now feeding fat on the people's faith
In their campaign blandishments,
Was the fight just to share in
Etoudi Champaign parties?

What is this lethargy?

Hear the echoes of laughter from 'Mvomeka'a,
Witness the sullenness of a betrayed proletariat
The lion and tiger in a dance?
What is this lethargy?

That Learned Professor

Even after these years,
I cannot forget his brilliance
And those bulging eyeballs
Glaring at the unseen wretched masses
Behind the camera.

Used and abused,
His contributions no longer needed,
Professor K. K. spokesman of Mvondo
Lie-factory fame
With eyes bursting in deceit
A scholar, for a trifle reduced to a liar
Spews tales to a populace
Denying the government has blundered
Demoting himself to the joke
Of Njanga history.

How does a man tell such lies and
Face his wife at dusk?
How does a father disgrace himself thus
And attempt to correct his brood?

Otherwise it is called diplomacy,
But to insist on lying so bluntly
When even kids know the truth
Is to betray one's manhood.

Professor KK of Njangadom
Prophet of Mvondoism
Distinguished liar of the 20th century.

Lament of the Kolanut

To the eye, I am a solid whole,
But in essence more: bonded lobes,
Together clinging for survival
Together clinging for life. That is my
Message: together children you will thrive
Else perish in your separate strides.

At first I pass for a united whole
But look again and see my many sides;
My henna, markings of beauty
Not scars of divisiveness.

Daily I sacrifice myself for the love of you,
That my ways you may emulate,
My love practice so to flourish.
Alas daily my limbs are torn apart
My essence sacrificed
That love and peace may flourish – in vain.

Even after munching my body,
Washing it down with palm-tree nectar,
The squabbles begin again
With chief priests now lying,
And elders into pilferers turned,
Political, social, economic cannibals all.
And so my seeds scattered
Far and wide on alien shores
Even with this daily sacrifice of my body.

Let those with eyes see,
Those with ears hear:
To stop the wind dispersing my seeds
You must my ways follow.
Be one even with all your differences,
The lobes of a kolanut are never the same
But together they cling in welfare.

It is either that my children
Or perish, crushed by the rebounding waves of
Slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, globalization,
Divide and rule, kleptocracy.

Africa

And now Africa
Ridiculed and slighted,
Treated with condescension
And there you lie
My queen, raped and raped
Almost drained of your value
And now criminals jibe
And ridicule your plight,
Their gift for your hospitality.

But victory is yours woman;
You might have been raped
Your body violated
Yet your dignity looms large
As your spirit was never scathed,
The abode of your dignity.

They have had you
But you never said "yes,"
Not voluntarily,
True intercourse
Takes the body and the soul;
The one could be raided
The other must be given.

Therefore courage Africa
Yet there is time the rapist
To educate, his accomplices flushed.

Worry For My People

Worry for my people -
And their inverted priorities
To comprehend my anger
With ignorance forced upon them
Like true education

Listen to the lyrics
Of the age-long dirge
To learn the step of my dance

See the green on my plate
Served on this ancestral stool
And judge my health

Measure the deep in my sockets
And my shoulders
To analyze the ferocity of my appetite

Listen carefully to the mystery
Of the oracles
And determine the urgency of my call

Let me blow the conch
So that you may hear
The sound of the times (re-awakening)

Africa's Journey

Africa,
Your journey long and weary.
How like the biblical child
The children they have been,
Trusting loving and welcoming,
Yet your smile
Your hospitable ways
Your Achilles' heel
As you welcomed them – *acare* -
With circumspect because they
Resembled not the ebony wood.
But then, a visitor is a visitor
Your best you gave
But in your celebration
He chained your hands, and
today, from these shackles
To free thyself remains
The greatest blight, rearing its ugly
Head in different shades ...
Yet it is known,
It may take forever, but virtue
In the end will win.

A Mother's Tears

And now from this womb
This dark womb of mine
My seeds all about
Scattered and tossed
Like dirt in a storm
Of selfishness
Our nightmare of tribal power
Our Odyssey of neo-colonial strategy
And over and over
I am raped
By the tides of a strange rhythm
My sons and daughters
Stand and helplessly watch
Condemned to their propagandaed plight
Of ineptitude.

In strange lands, yet,
My blood excels
But my maternal dues
To strange bosoms are accorded
And here I stand
Lamenting,
My tears my maternal breasts bathing.

When children,
Shall enough be enough
And you all in reconciliation
Like the fingers of one hand stand
Your differences your wealth instead,
Determined against our detractors?

It were better like the bee
To sting and be killed
Rather than thy sting
In shame and servitude adorn.
Why must we wait for others

Our success to tell?
Is not the stomach
Its own time-keeper?

The Conspirators

A-ah, my people *la'é*
Give to Caesar what he is due
And be not conspirators.
Be the dragon fly
that unreservedly harbingers
the greatness of the dry-season;
Be the spotless egret that
high into the clouds soars
But humbles itself for a
Ride on the teakish bull's back.
Be like darkness that reigns but
Bows out in acknowledgment
Of dawns supremacy.
Be the talking drum which
Speaks not only of war
But cries out in joy at the
Arrival of the fon.
Unlike the lizard nod
Not only when the achievement
Is yours, but like a dog
Bow your tail between your thighs
In honor of an
Adversary's proven greatness.

Giving praise where it is due
A sign of maturity,
Of noble humility,
The mark of greatness which
Shows one knows and
Understands so much
One's limitations to acknowledge.

Be like the grass that
Will not tell of the dung's stench
So as to freely feed thereof.
Do not bite and not expect a scream,

Do not stab and not expect blood,
Plant and there shall be growth
Nurture and there will be a harvest.
Bless and in return be blessed,
Curse and in return be thyself damned.

If we be not this wise
But go on stabbing our backs
With suicidal strokes
Then doomed we are as a people.

Claustrophobia

Wherever I am in this vast world
I feel the pressure encroaching
Violating my right to life
One of God's own creations.
The persecution, rock solid, palpable
Even as hypocrites smile with me
From their lips instead of the belly.

At one place I am Anglo-minority
And so I do not belong,
And could very well go elsewhere,
My responsibility it is to survive
Amidst the chosen ones
Of the malnourished Francophonie assembly.

At another place I am black
"Beelzebub's alter ego" they say,
And so I do not belong
Else I am barely tolerated,
For my strength, a labor hand.

Goodness, now I am suddenly
The oppressor, a man — male!
Women can't stand me either, except
To share in the nocturnal apple.

Pray Lord, led Heaven be different,
Bigger and free, free of race, color, and gender,
That at last I may find room and peace,
Room enough for me to have space,
Peace for me to be calm and without worry at last
For being the one you created.

Victims

Mea Culpa

Once in grassfield clime,
A decade and beyond in time
A pretty lass
Through a friend-sister I met.
Give me the right to make a pass
And her affection shall be mine I bet.

Her image in a picture I had seen
Only to lust after it for days on end in sin,
Yet how true it is
My heart out to her flew with ease
And after her with determination I went
As if by some authority sent;
And by the goddess of love,
My heart to her flew like a dove.

And slowly I began the stalking
Hoping to get her into talking,
But each time the sound of my bike she heard
She took to her heels and fled.
Having noticed,
Once I came without notice
As in I rolled
The sound of my bike a lull;
There she sat with stares
Having been taken unawares.
Alas she smiled in defeat
Acknowledging my strategy a feat.

For days to come we stayed
At the game of cards we played
With I slowly inching in
Hoping someday to talk my way in.

And the day came
And after so many card games
Out by the door in the dark

I sang my tale of love like a lark.
All about me she cherished
But there was another she relished
And just so much love had she for one man,
Only to find him a cheat
And so ran into my arms in a fit.
She was to find me hardly much better
My love for another woman's I did batter
Thinking this old new-comer to exploit
Only to lose all by this exploit.
My betrayal she did find out
And her love for me (with so much pain and hate) ran out.

I was young, foolish and stupid
Yet my honest plea was rejected
Even though I was so young,
Once was too much to go this wrong.

Time has come and gone
But her hurt and anger
I see still seething,
More fruits of hate and hurt to bear.
Yet once more must I dare
My apology to bare.
You were yourself forgiven
So take not this plea for a given
But let this hurt and hate
Of ages long gone now abate.

I ask not for another chance
As this never could be
But that understanding be given a chance
For us true humans and not monsters to be;
For truly time with time must all neutralize
So let not the faults of adolescence
Be permitted an adult to condemn.
Mea Culpa!

My One Great Friend

I met a friend after so many years,
And we reminisced of the days of old,
His lament:

“Like every yesterday,
Those were loving years
And like us all,
Years of bliss, years so green,
When like fledgling birds
We experimented with wings of love
As out of our teenage cocoons
We took off in dangerous flights
Off the precipice of love
Daring a ride into this world
Of its own, this world for duos.

Some of us did take off
And fairly well too,
Yes, Su-- you were one of them,
Others just didn't
And behind yeomanly gestures hid.
Although we all crashed
And some so many times,
We learnt our lessons, lessons
Most invaluable as today all we
Do is regurgitate and we are
Rightly guided.

Su--, how I recall those gentle years
With your gentle and effeminate
strides as along the streets
Of 'Bambele' you strode
Wrecking longing hearts in
Your naiveté, your innocence.

It would have been Su--
After my own crash

But too hurt was I your gentle
Heart to accommodate,
And so away from Eden
Yet wanting a taste of Adam's doom.
How your stride I have trailed
And how here before me you stand
In beauty still so tall
In gentleness a colossus still.
Su--!

But for my blessings of today:
My Sheba and our brood,
How I would have hurt.
Blessed I am that in bliss
And with Bliss I reside, yet
So fondly of yesteryears I reminisce,
Those years in the mould,
With one great friend."

Yefon, Woman of Strength

For you woman of strength.
Decades like waves pregnant
With tidings have rolled by
Yet how constant are memories of your kindness?
Memories of how daring I was
Memories of how bold indeed I was.
You that lonely beauty surrounded
By wolfish young men
Their fangs bared in futility
Your green love to devour.
In their best, but for shirts white
Yefon, before you they paraded
In polished shoes, outfits en vogue
Only to be idly dismissed by
Your calm yet firm rebuttal.
Those tender eyes of yours,
Though all else in years barely sprouting
In common-sense so aged
You knew it is not gold
'Cause it shimmers.

In school-boy shorts
And Bata's "*pas un pas*"
Up to you gentle Yefon
I strode, all tensed but determined.
I know not when that mind was made up
But how like a cat with its prey
You toyed, rejecting my confessions
Of love. Yet
Deep down you knew I admired
Deep down you knew I loved,
Yet, on and on you toyed
Only to be saved by the bell
As to class I was thus summoned.
"I heard you."
"What do you mean?"

"I said I heard you, I'll be yours."

Ah, victorious warrior
From battle returned with the prize,
And at the end of the day my reward
A reptilian splash and away you vamoosed.

How the years came and went
How indeed we loved
But I your heart did break
Not malice, the error of misinterpretation:
Your long silence.

Woman of strength
Your calm you maintained
Your dignity forever in control
I must here my tale to an end bring
Else break this heart
Even after so many decades
That I the gentlest and most
Understanding did betray.
Even though I know those years
Did the pain heal?
Now I know how it must have hurt.
Even though there is proof that you did forgive
Let me, if only this once, and this late
Say it: I'm sorry.

And so my foolishness drove you
Into the wilderness, but now your boys,
How like you they look.
Commend me to them,
Woman of strength.

On My Id

I am God's design, no doubt,
And conscious of the world
Around me I have been.

Done all in my power to please
But rarely a kind word in return
Have I received.

Hours in thought have I spent
How my mistakes that others hurt
Never to repeat

And all I have done to please
My generosity for granted taken
My humble muteness branded arrogance

And so to the one I am Lucifer from hell
Freshly come, to the other
Kindness in flesh from heaven sent.

I cannot all please, not even God has
As at dawn He is praised only
To be chided at dusk.

To all then I give my best
To the one it is everything
To the other nothing

He that faults me, she that blesses
To God I give thanks for everything;
This existential paradox,

Just being me.

Champagnat's Model

(For Rev. Brother Norbert Simms)

In every life a goal is set
From the lowly in the eyes of men
To the noblest in man's esteem
Yet service was his goal
Service to humankind
Service to all and sundry.
Unlike some, he was color-blind
Race to him only a word
All are but God's children
To serve and improve upon,
A veritable Champagnat's model.
Often he fell, with belt in hand
his loud voice down the corridors,
But how else can mortality be identified?
Yet like the wind
He raced from function to function:
From the power-house to the film spool
From his room-pharmacy to the classroom,
From the labs to the football field
To referee a match....
Never before and never after
Will there another be to identify thus
His existence with this alien institution –
Sacred Heart College, Mankon.
None can come again to
Keep the entire country-side breathing thus.
Orphans now we are
For where will the sick and malnourished flock,
Where will the poor find consolation
Without this true apostle?
Fare well, but our doors
Will always be open;
Time might heal the pain of your departure
And reminiscing whispers from the heart the gap fill
But a legend to posterity

You will forever remain as I tell
My tale by day under the baobab
And by night by the fireside
Of a Marist Brother who served us
Like Champagnat would have wanted,
In the manner of the Master Himself – the Christ.

The Traveler's Invocation

Tung! Tung! Tung! Tung! Tung!
Palmwine splashing and filling up
The bamboo cable
Conveying calls to the cadaverous lips
Of my ancestors.

Wake up father
Wake up grandfather
Wake up grandmother
It is I the son of your son
Chasing away sleep from your eyes.

This is me again
About to tease the world
And see what I can find
At a time when daylight and darkness are one
When men shit through the mouth
And vomit through the anus.

Go ahead then and let me follow
Weaken those anxious to ruin my trip
That in my venture I might find
Them women in love instead.

Should my journey go well and I return,
Not only will your name resound in women's songs
Not only the taste of palmwine shall you remember, but
The thanksgiving of people fêted in your name
You shall hear, and once more smell the blood of bulls.

DEATH

(For Eugene Yande Ndefru, Geologist and teacher extraordinaire)

I

If only you would know
Who to visit,
If only you would know
when to visit,
If only you would know
How to visit

Never such a visitor
Have I encountered,
Who thinks only of herself,
Choosing when to visit
An un-expecting, an unsuspecting
Friend or foe.

This visitor who determines
What she will eat before
Visiting her hosts.
And you eat to your full,
Usually a heavy blow
To your host's budget –
Spiritually and materially.

And without shame you leave,
Without a "thank you," but
With a promise to return,
As if you brought silver and gold
The first time.
It is this attitude of yours
That I hate,
This guts of yours that disgusts me.

A coward indeed you are,

Or sure you are of your hideous looks, else
Show us your face if we
Shall not envy, egotism, and
Ingratitude find written all over.

Yet I know you,
Only a messenger taking liberties
As to how your message to deliver.
Yet beware of me
For your Master I serve!

II

I have said Death is envious
But people say no;
Even grey strands too,
But their "no" is sibling to a sad smile.
They know what I say is true
But are afraid of Death to accept.

Yet there is proof it started
From the beginning. If not envy
Then mere viciousness it is,
Else tell me how a chameleon
A race with dog will win?
Who put the distraction in
The path of dog if not Death
So the slow chameleon
Its message will drum?

Even then, ever since then
It has eaten and eaten and is eating.
Even God got tired on Saturday
Why does not death?

I say Death is envious
And people say no.

Who has not heard a parent
Who has not heard a spouse
Offering himself in place of death's
Choice? Has death ever to such
Pleas listened?
Tell me the day Death has
Changed its mind permanently.

No! Death is jealous of us.

III

This Death!
How like a coward you inch in,
Like a thief looking left and right,
Methodically you bide your time
Savoring the spurting saliva
As you your next meal relish.
With culinary methodology
You broil with this ailment,
And then lace with that.

Like the king of animals
In a hunting spree
You crouch, stealthily approaching
As the seconds tick by;
With selfish relish
You stalk your battered prey
Now you claw and then release
As screams cut through the air
Then you claw more deeply yet release
Whetting your appetite.

Then suddenly you leap,
Claws protruding,
With snarling fangs

At once all buried
In the diseased-battered body;
On your prey you lie panting,
Once more victorious
As life is squeezed out of
Yet another victim.
This Death! This Death!

The Trail

This journey so tedious,
Of plains stretching as far as the eyes can see
Of hills so high into the sky
Yet valleys deep into the belly of the sea
And on mankind must toil,
Marching across plains
Climbing and descending
To the one a journey by day
To the other one a journey by night
To yet another a journey into the unknown
Yet to the other a divine quest.
And on we must forge
Mere pilgrims along the trail
Until journey's end.
Realization!

The Tombstone

(For Engineer Charles Fofang)

A-a-a-h! Engineer Charles Fofang,
"Uncle 'thgineer," baby Bertrand
Would lisp as you storm in;
Years have trudged by
Ever since that last blink
Yet how like yesterday it seems
I can still hear your car
Up the driveway,
Your voice of affection
Calling out;
This personification of devotion,
Like a human tornado
Cascading through the sitting
room into the kitchen and
Back, lifting up child after child
In a boisterous show of affection.

A-ah Charlie-Boy,
In the middle of everything,
At the dawn of your career
Snatched away from loved ones.
Yet even in death, like the mighty eagle,
Your kindness soars higher,
Your friendliness looms larger;
Alas all we can do is recall,
Recall those great days of yesteryears.
But there across the bridge
We know you stand
Waiting for time to usher us
Into your celestial embrace
And into our Father's mansion
Where we all must show up
Sooner or later.

Soon my knock on the threshold

You will hear by the Master's grace
And together, forever, we will into the horizon.

SAMARITAN I

(For my father Pa Philip Doh Awah)

The rhythm of the tam-tam no more
Even with a storm
The fountain is gone dry
Even with the rain drops
The baobab withered

With so much labor
As you tilled and planted,
Nursing in sun and storm
Away with the scavengers

And now with the rains
The dawn of the harvest
The lush greenery of success
This dove away must fly

Like the Master
You labored to the tree
With all these Peters
Yet on you forged
Determined your father's will to do
Even with all the blows of ingratitude
Your last to breathe without
Simon, without Veronica

How wise is the Psalmist
How vast and true his wisdom?
Indeed, the ways of the Lord are His.

And so I celebrate despite my grieve,
Your call to rest.

Samaritan II

Ah Death!

You the raging coward,
You the one engaged in
A duel with rules
Fashioned after your tradition,
Tailored without objectivity.

How bizarre you are:
You take your time
Feeding fat while starving
Your prey, or else
If not illness
The surprise tactic you resort to
When least your opponent expects,
The gong to begin is sounded,
Again by one of your siblings
And “wam,” crushed in
An accident as monstrous
As you look.

Across the Styx you row
Excited over one more victim.
Some day you will be unmasked
And your nightly hood forever
Ruined; your sulphurous appearance
Exposed.

You wonder why I fight?
‘Cos I have nothing to lose
Twice and more to me you’ve
Proven yourself victor – player and arbiter
See you again, this under-the-belt jab
You’ve given me

Ah, now the lion roars no more
And hyenas yap in his wake

And in vain desecrating his essence
Alas to you I owe gratitude
That now the appearance of mediocrity I know
Alas thank you
That now I know what envy can sow,
And the double faces are uncovered

Thank you
I understand the harvest of defeat
And the bearing of evil now I know

But after all the slander
After the betrayal
The truth remains towering
As all else crumbles with temporal revelation.

Thunderclap

(For Bate Besong)

We know there is the end
Your urgency yet extraordinary
The impending spilling of gore
In your lonely styxian abode.
And so when even a teething scholar
You rushed your message
And then as master
You rushed your ideas
To the cheated and exploited proletariat
Exposing Beelzebuban trails
By an unpatriotic leadership aka Banditti

You restless spirit,
Like the town crier, from north to south,
Sounding your gong:
A spade a spade.
Like the Obasinjom at work
Enraged spirit from east to west
Crying purgation
To a nation, a world doomed by kleptocrats

You fought, you struggled
Ah, you prophet in the wilderness
Lamenting the decay and calling for a change,
The decadence forges on with orgiastic relish
And so shameful that the national portrait
Disgraced us all BB,
Turning us into migrant laborers
Instead of the fertile patch
Fertilizing our nation's tomorrow.

In so short a time your job
So well done, your voice resounding
In the winds of time and age
To a younger generation,

Jasons, with the fleece in sight.

Now liberated spirit
Begin a new phase
Fire the souls you fueled
Oh Antonio, that a new generation
This nation's health may improve.

Ah, the Master's choice
The ripest, even as His children lament
His knowledge supreme;
Though hard to imagine,
Our good His goal.
So let me dry these tears.
At Heaven's gate, Northern Star
You sit and wait
Until my trudging you hear
As I arrive with tales of an improved nation,
With tales of a purged tide.

Musing

Time

Time,
Your constancy baffles me
Your supremacy acknowledged
See how you do your things
When you want them done
So slow, yet so sure
That the job to be done
Will be done.
Take my life,
Like the invading
Of a landscape,
With time, you Time
Have inched into the core
Of my youthfulness
Reminding how much of you
I have consumed,
As now once powerful joints creek,
With beefy muscles now in
Protest wobbly about,
My once black strands now
Slowly turning silvery.
Indeed Time
You will forever defeat all,
You gentle master.

Birth Tidings

To my people
The news of a baby
Brings much joy:
Fears of infertility
Discarded. Multiplication:
A likely successor if a boy,
Else an in-law guaranteed.
And so we make merry,
The new spirit to welcome
That guarantees continuity
Of the family name, of the clan
Of our people.
Birth tidings!

On Being Betrayed

You that from time to time
Splash out in arrogance, like
A gorgon rearing your serpentine head
Forging on, brandishing sword and shield,
For ever with determination
Havoc to raise
Hell to reawaken
This Iscariotic concern
This Pilatic cleansing
Where were you when
Like Michael the hellish legion
Trouble from your paternal threshold
Could have been chased away?
And like the crocodile you weep
Only to distance your small-poxed id
To feed fat your hypocritical ego
Once upon a time we bonded
Yet now how slander, your treachery
Seeds of woe and separation have sown.

Ah ambition unbridled – destruction!

On Familiarity and Contempt

This fawning Iscariot stooping and kneeling like a cur
From my garden to earn a carrot
On and on exploiting sycophancy for a spur
And I for one thinking
I had a consanguine growing
But this villager in a city stumbled
To him heaven he had humbled
And so over all he lorded it
Even God meant not a bit
To this bloated maggot

The journey yet was to begin
He thought he had arrived
That nobles may not for long
With serfs and farm hand belong
That the aged not for long
With the young together belong
Fooled by such proximity in bed
The shoulder above the head
Tries to soar
To find its efforts unproductive

For only a while can hypocrisy reign
As the truth even from the skies will rain.

I Am Who I Am

To them
Bizarre, strange, weird, even arrogant
While knowing not the events
That crafted this disposition.
And after all, at the end
Of the tunnel, a mind burnished,
I stand and stare
Confirming after reminiscing:
I am who I am
Sculptured thus by the hand
Of time and her decorations.
That I am happy with this finish,
That my goal has not been man
To satisfy, but with Him to identify
I stand back now and smile
At the meaningless portraits
Painted thus by envy, or else
Viciousness, knowing that closer to Him
I have come after Troy,
After poseidic bulwarks, mental and physical,
I the product.
Why must I, by your rules
With mine fashioned by tides and storms?
Idle chatterers with crawling egos.
I am who I am.

Metamorphosis of the Homo Sapiens

Hunched over
Cane firmly griped
Like a crooked seven.
But how to this destination
With the smiles and pink post-partum beauty?
Yet time has tricks to play, and
Surprises to pull.

Then, young, robust, striding,
All that charm: a physique with stature,
Then this, then that.
Apothecaries, post diagnosis.
More this, more that,
Support needed for baulk in throes.

Further then, baby, toddler;
Laughter, energy from the womb
Knowledge to wisdom,
And now the cane,
Later no more – Rest!
From the womb
To the grave
The metamorphosis
Of the Homo Sapiens.

How Much Akin

He cured them of their scalding bodies
And bid them show their elders
That now they may be accepted.
He brought the dead to life and bade
Them walk again, and
The disabled He made whole
And without their curse.

But mankind knows not gratitude
So with the cross he was rewarded
Even then, He remains true
To His nature – devine – forgiving.

See them without a tomorrow
And without identities
Sprawling in wanton neglect.
Like war “casualties”
They languish without a roof
Only for you to come in and mend.
See them without trades
Only for you to step in and train

But today listen to the serpent,
His forked tongue wagging forth
Treachery, as he slanders and desecrates
Your noble roots – a Moses – crowned
By Pharaoh himself, head of the house.
And now a salvaged Nothing challenges
Your very kindness. But like a dog
All he can do is bay at the moon
Lamenting the frustration of his fountain

See him accusing you of being picked up by the lake
See him calling you names
See his glass windows and he throws stones:
This leader of an Oedipusan progeny.

The First Rains

The wind blows and blows
Fogging the air with dust
Flipping particles, the rhythm of confusion,
Dusty confusion in the savannahs.
The wind blows and gently dies down
The children rush out to continue
Their fractured games.
The wind blows.

The wind blows
Indoors again they rush as usual
Cheating the dust of victory
But from within, they hear
Another rhythm tac-tacking
On the corrugated sheets
The rhythm of the first rains.
The wind blows.

The wind blows,
Out the children flow
To embrace the drops and baptize
Themselves with the freshness
The first rains of the season.
The wind blows.

The fresh wind blows,
Winds of the first rains
With time it shows its beauty
As muted nature rears its head
In sprouting buds and zipping dragonflies;
The once dusty air smells and feels fresh
The wind blows...

The first rains of the rainy season.

Bird of the Night

My people hate you
And with good reasons
Your hooting in the dark raises our hair
We know not if it is the hooting only
Or the stories tied to it.

That witches do take your
Shape and wreak havoc.
You are to blame
whatever the case.
See the eagle soaring
And by day commanding the skies,
The gentle nightingale will at night sing
Or else it purses up until dawn

But you, you prefer the hooting night
When hardly anything worthy stirs
And side by side the bat
With its reversed priorities
You reign in darkness.
You brought it upon yourself.
My people hate you!

My Love Is Gone

I

Now alone,
How gloomy all else is,
How slow the racing time has become
With the pressure choking me

How pale the moon
How dark this night of your departure
My heart still bleeds
Empty it feels yet heavy:
The weight of separation.

There is joy in the distance,
Someday you will return.

II

And she's gone
Life's meaninglessness dawns on me,
Long and empty are my days
Lonely, deep, and frightening my nights
What a wasteland the world without her!

The moon is of no purpose
And the rising sun without sheen
For she is gone
I must once more see you, touch you,
Love you before this heart bursts.

III

Here she comes
Answering to my call
Borne by the gentle winds

"I heard you, yes I did
How strange but true
For here am I.

Weep no more my absence
Let time speed by
Let day into night and night into day
Turn, here am I.

And when I leave once again
Weep no more for now you know
I will be there when I hear that voice
Calling in the wind.
Here am I”.

The Mind and its Games

The mind, that labyrinth of vast
Mentalscape, of jagged
Mental and emotional vibrations
Cascading this abstract territory and
Overwhelming the self with
Overpowering thought patterns.

Radiant the self would be
If at peace or happy the mind,
And miserable
If the mind is at war.

The mind, this complex abstract
Machinery, so overwhelming,
Sealed off somewhere in the human essence
With only the eyes, unrevealing
Windows into this loaded vastness,
The mouth a distorting interpreter of its state.
The mind can play games.

The Pieta

This Pieta,
With thy awe-inspiring slimness
A leanness that is beauty and wealth.
With thy all-touching concern
To ensure that none
Who to Mary shall turn,
To ascertain that all whom
Christ's name shall call,
May never perish
The Pieta, how you teach me
To live and how to die.

Despair

(For G. Shadrach Ambanasom)

I

This hour so bleak
This moment so hopeless
When all seem lost
When all seem in vain
And the spirit of Disaster smiling satisfaction,
I wonder ever so often,
If life be not an expensive game
With man an accursed pawn
With spirits beaming at the
Futility or success of strategies
As now some human survives
Only to die then
Like an unfortunate Queen.

II

For how long Lord
Must I love return
Instead of hate for hate?

How much more Lord
Must I their lashing tongues
In sterile muteness withstand?

How much longer Lord
Must I their baseless caustic tales
About me ignore?

With my own have I
Become a bear at the stake,
With my own
A farm horse turned
With scars on the hide
Of my pride
Yet I must my neighbor

Like myself love?

Yet thou art all-knowing;
Even then, Lord,
How thorny is thy path.

For once Lord let me answer back,
Like the human being that I am,
Or did you say seventy times seventy times?

III

Lord, have I not asked?
Lord have I not sought?
Lord have I not knocked?

My heart tells me you've answered,
Yet how low is thy voice;
My soul tells me you are revealing
Yet how blurred is the scene?
My being tells me you've opened
But I heard not thy door creak.
Yet I know you are Truth
And devotion to your words.

Even then Lord,
How so subtle thou art.
And believe I must
Else what is life about.

Pretenders to the Throne

And in the heat of this hour
I look at all the ado gone sour
I wonder at humankind's sense of priority
A bizarre notion of true value,
How warped our sense of worth!

I see pretenders to scholarly thrones
Iagoan in their effort politicians to turn,
I see those the "ignorant" to nurture
Themselves worse than any plague,
Yet parading as masters of the hour.

I cannot help but wonder
At the cavities they amount to
Sons of darkness, manipulating
Idle minds in search of a hero
To free them from their woes.

That you will stand and curse like a god
That you slander and fawn in the same breath
To be schooled yet so uneducated
Thus proven by vicious Hypocrisy
What a wasted mind, and so dangerous

As in your rant you destroy
In the guise of cultivating
A true Beelzebub, Lucifer's number One.
Today your true nature you may hide
In that reeking philanthropy
But time, time!

Forever darkness may seem to rule
With shadows conjuring apparent wholesome shapes
Time alone will usher in dawn
And open this can of worms.

Ship Ahoy!

(After the death of our father)

Henceforth this ship must sail
Unguided by the northern star.
See the sea frowning
And the sky rumbling her displeasure
The cascading waves
Like rolling Kilimanjaros;
This ship without a captain
This ship without a compass
Yet onwards it must forge.

And I, only a deckhand,
Alas the captain's counsels
Froth to the fore of my brain
Drowning me in his wisdom,
And thus my resolve is made stronger
My understanding profound.
Let it storm, let it rain
The captain no more may be found
But his wisdom lingers on
With those he sired
With those gratefuls he rescued.

Let the master juggler of souls
Set to work
Your idle time you waste
As your tongue blunts itself
Against the armor of his integrity.

***Not Yet Damascus* celebrates a tumultuous era without patriotic leaders willing to transform their national wastelands into thriving bastions. The collection salutes and queries: a panoramic collection intended for the sensitization of all, hence the simple yet evocative approach.**



“Poetry can be therapeutic, allowing the poet to work through issues in life; to find solutions, clarity, comfort, and peace of mind. It provides a vehicle of expression for diverse attitudes and fresh insights. Emmanuel Fru Doh has achieved this feat in this collection of poems *Not Yet Damascus*. He speaks in a confident tone of prophetic utterances: advising, warning, denouncing, protesting and chiding.” - **Peter Wuteh Vakunta, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA**

“This is the passionate poetry of a patriotic son of Cameroon. Here is a contemplative, sensitive soul that watches and registers on his emotional meter, and in potent imagery, the terrible damage done to his people, country, and continent.” - **Shadrach Ambanasom, Professor of Literature, University of Yaounde I (E.N.S. Annex Bambili), Cameroon**



Born in Cameroon, Emmanuel Fru Doh holds a Ph.D in English (Literature emphasis) from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Between 1990 and 1997 he taught African Literature at the University of Yaounde I (ENS Bambili), Cameroon, during which time he established himself as a major voice in Cameroon’s literary arena. An accomplished teacher, poet, and critic, Emmanuel Fru Doh currently teaches in the Department of English at Century College, Minnesota, U.S.A. where he is also Associate Editor of *Phantasmagora*.



Langaa Research and Publishing
Common Initiative Group
P.O. Box 902 Mankon
Bamenda
North West Province
Cameroon

ISBN 978-9956-558-07-0



9 789956 558070

Cover by Emmanuel Fru Doh, Design by Neil Johnston